

The United States Army, National Guard, and Reserves: Can the One-Team Concept Mean One “Equal” Team?

by Captain Michael L. Scholes, Sr.

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The Army recently announced the need to involve Reserve Component units in the NATO stabilization role in Bosnia. Since 1989, the number of Army deployments has grown by over 300%, yet the Army's Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) strength have shrunk by over 40%.¹ This reality has forced the Army to develop a strategy that involves maximum participation of RC units to help ease the burden on the active force. Should this be necessary? Should the Department of Defense (DoD) expect the RC force to play such a pivotal role in our nation's defense, or are they asking too much of a part-time force in a peacetime Army?

The need for more soldiers participating in Operations Other Than War (OOTW) missions has increased dramatically over the last decade since the end of the Cold War. This reality was not fully appreciated or anticipated by our government when legislation was passed, pushed by the Clinton Administration, that aggressively undercut the manpower and budget of the military. Because of these budgetary policy changes, the ability of the AC to deploy and fight in two separate Major Regional Conflicts (MRCs)² has been diminished. Congressional testimony by DoD officials and the Joint Chiefs of Staff put into question the United States' ability to meet this policy. Also, added to this MRC reaction capability is the increased use of our forces in OOTW operations around the world, including Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, etc. This policy change to use American soldiers as Stabilization Forces (SFOR) was not planned nor anticipated when the two-MRC criterion was established.

This ability to respond to so many contingency operations has placed stress on an active military that has seen resource cuts by as much as one-third of its size since the Gulf War. The missions have increased since the Gulf War, but the resources have diminished. The core mission-essential units in DoD are already feeling the effects of this policy.

For example, the Air Force is experiencing tremendous readiness issues because pilots who complete their initial obligation are resigning their commissions to make more money in the commercial airline industry, without having to deploy for months at a time. Air Force capabilities were stressed by recent air strikes in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, while maintaining air patrols over Iraq. This need for aircrew deployed to both theaters was taxing for many of the pilots who had to fly these missions. All branches of service are experiencing similar circumstances and are struggling to fill the holes in the dike. This reality is forcing a DoD policy change that uses more and more reserve forces in active missions, such as peacekeeping operations, while active forces concentrate on maintaining readiness to react to possible MRC missions or contingency operations.

The RC is made up of the Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Naval Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard Reserve. The RC has always played an instrumental role in our nation's defense. They are counted on to provide the necessary leverage to offset the risks of a smaller active duty force.³ Historically, the RC has been used more in combat support roles, but the need to fill the gaps left by a shrinking active force has caused a change in policy by the DoD. Now, buzz words by the Army leadership describe the AC and RC units as the “Total Force” or “The Army” or “One Team” in an attempt to change the stigma that has been viewed toward the RC force by the AC force. General Eric K. Shinseki, as part of his remarks at a ceremony welcoming him as the 34th Chief of Staff of the United States Army, stated:

*Today, I declare that we are **The Army** — totally integrated, with a unity of purpose — no longer the Total Army, no longer the One Army. We are **The Army**, and we will march into the 21st century as **The Army**. We acknowledge our components and their unique strengths. But we*

*are **The Army**, and we will work to structure ourselves accordingly.*⁴

There are two ways in which DoD can use the RC in peacetime. Federal law provides the President with the ability to order reservists involuntarily to active duty for 270 days. (10 U.S.C. 12304) This process is known as the Presidential Selected Reserve Call-up (PRSC) authority. The other way is for the individual reservists to volunteer for a specified mission or duty. With the mission of the RC changing to fit the *One Team* concept, the need for them to accept more long-term operations, relieving the burden on the AC, is becoming more and more necessary.

The Army recently announced specific RC units for service in Bosnia as part of the NATO Stabilization Force. The 49th Armored Division, headquartered in Austin, Texas, is a National Guard unit that is already part of the SFOR mission in Bosnia. Other National Guard units have been notified or alerted that their units have been chosen to support this OOTW operation. This call-up is significant in the fact that whole units will be called for nine months, severely affecting the communities where they are located. In wartime or other national emergencies, this reality would be expected and anticipated. However, should it be necessary or expected that a RC unit would deploy for such a length of time because of a depleted active force?

The Army Vision expects its forces to dominate any force or enemy that threatens our nation:

*The Army will be responsive and dominant at every point on that spectrum. We will provide to the nation an array of deployable, agile, versatile, lethal, survivable, and sustainable formations, which are affordable and capable of reversing the conditions of human suffering rapidly and resolving conflicts decisively. The Army's deployment is the surest sign of America's commitment to accomplishing any mission that occurs on land.*⁵

The question remains as to how the RC force should meet this vision statement.



There is no question as to whether the RC can benefit from deployments on “real world” missions. In 1998, service members participated in 178 projects in 39 states in fiscal year 1998 and in more than 200 projects during fiscal year 1999. The Innovative Readiness Training Program (IRTP), established in 1993, involved the Guard in a majority of the programs that help to support the President’s Rebuild of America program. The program provided reserve units the ability and flexibility to maintain readiness and act in concert with the “Total Force.” However, these deployments involved smaller units for less time than a NATO Stabilization Force will require. The policy of involving more and more RC units in long-term peacekeeping missions to supplement the mission load of the AC will not survive the test of time.

The “One Team” concept, though good in theory, cannot mean one equal team performing the same role — active does not equal reserve. If it did, why have the AC? The more the DoD tries to make the National Guard and Reserve equal members of the same team, the quicker the policy will fail. There is just so much the

government can ask of the local business leaders, entrepreneurs, families, and the communities of these part-time servicemen trying to perform in a full-time role. The more these entities are treated as equal partners on the same team, the more the differences between the two contrasts — same team, but not equals.

A typical RC unit is composed of public servants (mainly law enforcement personnel), entrepreneurs, full-time college students, business leaders and employees, and a myriad of other positions in which the servicemen fill managerial roles. Their parent organizations have supported these employees through countless deployments, weekend training events or IDTs, call-ups, and annual training (AT) exercises. Asking them to accept yet another exercise that is longer in duration (nine months, including the unit’s train-up to prepare for deployment), which is not national defense-critical, may be asking them to swallow one bitter pill too much.

In peacetime, the RC should have limited involvement in the same missions the AC performs during real world deploy-

ments, training events, SFOR missions, or other readiness exercises. These limited call-ups would help to prepare the RC units for possible national emergencies and defense missions in accordance with their mission. There is no question that history has taught us that a robust citizen soldier force is vital to the nation’s preparedness in case of a threat to our national defense. However, there needs to be clear separation between the missions of the AC and RC force — they are not equal. The expectations of the DoD and the expectations of the American public and private sector should balance. Sacrifices will have to be made by all sides, including Congress and the White House.

There are many possible solutions to help create balanced expectations. The most important involves the defense budget, which gets axed, trimmed, attacked, and filibustered every year. The defense budget is the easiest budget line to get cut or manipulated during every budgetary session.

*Even the most efficient use of resources cannot compensate for a lack of resources... Defense spending accounts for **3.0 percent** of GDP and is declining — the lowest since Pearl Harbor—while the armed forces are as busy as ever.⁶*

It’s easier to tell the soldier he has to do without than to tell the same thing to a particular voting district. The American public demands, and the Constitution dictates, that the United States’ legislative and executive branches provide for the nation’s defense. To do that effectively, they need to provide the resources necessary to keep the military well fed, trained, and manned to accomplish any mission that the President and/or Congress deems in our best interest. Soldiers do not care about the politics involved in the execution of policy by either of those sacred bodies. However, we [the American public] expect the Army leadership to be given the resources necessary to effectively accomplish any mission. Also, our leaders are equally expected to take care of those soldiers in their charge who are expected to carry out the missions assigned. MG Edison E. Scholes (USA, Ret.) once said that:

...This country never meant for anybody but the best, the most dedicated, the most

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selfless — to have the power of life and death over those they lead and those that must go in harm’s way to represent what this country stands for...⁷

The government is entrusted to ensure the AC and RC is prepared for any calling. Let’s not forget history that demonstrates how legislative actions and policy manipulation seriously undercut defense spending, compromising the readiness of the armed forces and their ability to react to provoked attacks; December 7, 1941 (WWII), Task Force Smith (Korean War), and the Tet Offensive (Vietnam). In *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*, Colonel Harold Moore chronicled how seasoned War World II and Korean War veterans were rifted after each conflict, affecting his unit’s readiness just before it was to deploy to Vietnam.

We were the children of the 1950s and John F. Kennedy’s young stalwarts of the early 1960s. He told the world that Americans would go anywhere, pay any price, bear any burden in the defense of freedom. We were the down payment on that costly contract, but the man who signed it was not there when we fulfilled his promise...⁸

His unit had been assembled, trained to a razor’s edge, and then undercut just before it was ordered to combat. Its effects were devastating, resulting in needless loss of life, equipment, and material. The Vietnam War is remembered today as a war that was a political quagmire pitting the politicians on Capitol Hill against the commanders in the field who couldn’t use the resources or doctrine at hand to fight and win.

If the necessary resources were made available to the AC, the need to involve the RC in more and more of the active roles would dissipate. The United States Army, National Guard, and the Reserve make a powerful combination. This triad has proven its ability to win on the battlefield, but let’s not forget the particular role they play and how they affect our society. The roots of the RC run deep throughout the communities in which they belong. To think otherwise, not considering the long-term effects a peace-

keeping deployment will mean for a community, is to take advantage of the trust that community and the nation places in its leaders. Politicians need to fix the problem of diminishing military resources. Soldiers are our nation’s treasure and need to be given the proper resources, allowing them the ability to successfully accomplish the role they play in our nation’s defense.

In conclusion, working as a team, the U.S. Army, National Guard, and Reserve are necessary forces to deter and eliminate the threats of the XXI Century. This triad, working together, creates the flexibility necessary to compete in a global theater while dealing with diminishing resources in the annual defense budget battle in Congress. However, it needs to be realized that the more these three components are made equals, the harder it will be to define the lines of mission responsibility in the future. It will also make it easier for the DoD to task a Reserve or National Guard unit for longer deployments, filling the void left by the AC, enhancing their expectations and dependence on the RC’s increased role.

These forces are not equals, and should not be tasked as equals. The RC should be used to provide the AC the flexibility necessary to lessen the burden of an already overburdened mission load. The Constitution and the American people demand that we give the military the necessary resources to defend our great nation. This responsibility not only protects the nation but the soldiers who are expected to carry out that mission unselfishly — we owe it to them.

Notes

¹U.S. Army News Release. Army Announces Unit Rotation Plan For Bosnia Release #99-100, October 26, 1999.

²When the Clinton Administration pushed for a Reduction in Force (RIF), they used the two MRC capability as a gage in determining the size of the active force. It was determined the force needed to be large enough to be able to support two separate major conflicts simultaneously.

³Department of Defense, Office of the Executive Secretary, National Guard and Reserve, Chapter 22, <http://www.dtic.mil/adr97/chap22.html>

⁴Reimer, Dennis J. General (USA Ret). *Intent of the Chief of Staff, Army*. Active/Reserve Component Integration Homepage, June 23, 1999, <http://www.paed.army.mil/acrc/oneteam/yellow9904.htm>

⁵The Army Vision: *Soldiers On Point for the Nation...Persuasive in Peace, Invincible in War*. Army Chief of Staff Homepage. December 29, 1999. <http://www.hqda.army.mil/ocsa/vision.htm>

⁶One Team, One Fight, One Future: *Total Army Integration*. Active/Reserve Component Integration Homepage. <http://www.paed.army.mil/acrc>

⁷Scholes, Edison E. MG (USA, Ret.). Letter to the author. February 17, 1997.

⁸Moore, Harold G. LTG (USA Ret) and Gallo-way, Joseph (Contributor). *We Were Soldiers Once and Young*. Random House, New York. 1991.

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CPT Michael L. Scholes was commissioned in Armor from North Georgia College in 1988. He served as a tank platoon leader, executive officer, assistant S3, and support platoon leader for 3-73 Armor, 82nd Airborne Division. He was a SMO, commanded in the 1-16th Cavalry Regiment, and was the chief of Armor Platoon Training and Doctrine at Fort Knox. Following graduate school and an ROTC assignment at Georgia Military College, he became a senior trainer for the 1-108th Armor Battalion at Calhoun, Ga. He has completed the CAS3, AOAC, AOBC, Jumpmaster, Airborne, NBC Defense, and Air Movement courses.